

“CHRIST FIRST, ME LAST—NOTHING BETWEEN BUT LOVE”

NO. 2370

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 22, 1894
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“The faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”
Galatians 2:20

PAUL looks at the matter of salvation from the point of view suggested by grace. If any man might have said, “The Son of God, whom I have loved, and to whom I have given myself,” it would have been the apostle. On another occasion, speaking of the Lord, he said, “Whose I am, and whom I serve,” but here he thinks not of himself, or of what he had been led to do for the Lord, but only of what the Lord had done for him. He dug down to the foundation of salvation, he traced the stream of grace back to the fountainhead, and therefore he spoke of “the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

You will not do wrong, my beloved friends, if you meditate on what the grace of God has enabled you to do, if you do it humbly, and if you praise God for it. I think that we sometimes forget to give glory to the Lord for the sanctification we have already received. I have heard persons thank God for their health, and for their wealth, but I have not so often heard them express gratitude for grace. I do not know that I wish to hear them praise God for their virtue, but still, if they have any, and they know that they have it, let them praise God for it, for what virtue have they which they have not received?

If you have any faith, if you have any hope, if you have any love, if there is any difference between you and your fellow men, if you possess anything by which God is glorified, you ought to thank Him for it, and to praise and bless His holy name. Still, there would always be a tendency, in dwelling even on what we have done by the grace of God, to begin to get unduly exalted, and on the whole it is far wiser to think of what Christ has done for you than of what you have done for Him.

I say, again, you may think of what you have done for Christ and give God the glory of it, but it will not be well to dwell upon that thought to any great extent. I am sure it will not do to think upon it in the hour of deep distress of mind, and especially in the prospect of death. Then we gather up all our good works, and throw them overboard, we look upon the best things that we have ever wrought, even by the power of the Spirit of God, as quite secondary to what Christ has wrought out for us, and brought in and laid before His Father as the ground of our acceptance with Him.

I like to think of our text and I invite you to think of it in the light of free grace. “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.” I cannot preach much at this time, but I can talk to you a little of what I have tasted, and handled, and felt, and I pray the Holy Spirit to help you, not so much to hear the text explained, as to feel its gracious influence moving over your spirit, and awakening in your heart happy memories of gratitude for blessings received.

I. Our first division shall be THE FACT REMEMBERED, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

Paul speaks of it as a fact ascertainable, and one which he had himself ascertained, that Jesus Christ loved him and gave Himself for him. He is not speaking now of the love of benevolence which the Lord Jesus Christ has towards all men, or even of that aspect of His work which bears upon every creature under heaven, but he is thinking of that special love, that discriminating grace which had lighted upon him. That is the point around which our thoughts are to gather as we meditate upon Paul’s words, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

The apostle knew that Christ had loved him, and had given himself for him, and we also may know it. It is not necessary for us to go through life merely hoping and fearing, questioning and inquiring, we may come to the certain knowledge of the fact, if it be a fact, that we have an interest in the special love of Jesus Christ, that we are redeemed from among men, that we are called and separated to be the Lord's peculiar people, that each of us may be able to say of the Lord Jesus Christ, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

I would not distress the mind of anyone who is feeble in faith, and who is clinging to Christ, but has never yet received full assurance of salvation, but I would encourage such a person never to rest until he gets rid of all questions, and is able to say without the slightest trepidation, “Who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*.”

Christ died to save sinners, the sinners who are saved by Him are those who trust Him, I trust Him, therefore He has saved me. This is a good, sound argument. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” I believe on Him, therefore I have everlasting life. This is solid ground to rest upon. “He loved me, and gave himself for me,” whereof the evidence is that I trust Him. I rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

To this will be added the evidences of a work of grace in the heart. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” “One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see.” We know this also by the witness of the Holy Spirit, for “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God,” and so at last we come to say with as much confidence as Paul himself could say it, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

Away then, with all doubts and questions, be gone, ye evil birds that pollute the sacrifice! By a simple childlike faith we come to Jesus, and we take Him to be our Savior. We know that we cannot come to Jesus unless the Father, which sent Him, draws us. Therefore we know that we are drawn by grace divine, and that He hath loved us with an everlasting love, because with lovingkindness He has evidently drawn us to Himself. So you see, Paul is speaking of a fact that is ascertainable, and a fact that in his own case was ascertained. If we do not get to know it for ourselves, we cannot rejoice in it.

Now just think for a few minutes of some well-known but very blessed truths which gather about this fact, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.” And first, it is *a divine love*. Paul speaks of “the Son of God, who loved me.” There are some persons who would be greatly delighted if they heard that some nobleman loved them, and if we were informed that some prince or princess loved us, we might feel ourselves elevated, yet there would be very little in it to make us proud.

If we were informed that an angel loved us with all the great heart of an unfallen spirit, we might take comfort from the fact, but the text reminds us that it is the Son of God who has loved us. I cannot talk about this divine love as it deserves, but I want you to try and feel in your soul, “Jesus Christ loves me, not merely feeds me, thinks upon me, is favorably inclined to me, but He *loves* me.”

Love is a grand word, even in its silver use among men and women, but love in its golden use with God in heaven, what does it not mean? Oh, marvelous indeed is the love of God towards His people! I say again that I cannot worthily speak of it, words seem such poor things to express the love of God. They break their backs in trying to convey the wondrous weight of meaning.

If this love is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost, your heart's love will best read and understand this wondrous fact that the divine Being, the everlasting Father, and His ever-blessed Son, and the sacred Spirit, the great Trinity in Unity, loves you. Oh, delight yourselves in this glorious truth! It is a sea of sweetness, dive into it and be filled with it.

The language of the text also suggests to me that I should remind you that the love of Jesus was *an ancient love*. It is true that He loves us now, but Paul also wrote truly, “Who *loved* me.” The verb is in the past tense. Jesus loved me upon the cross, loved me in the manger of Bethlehem, loved me before the earth was. There never was a time when Jesus did not love His people. “Or ever the earth was,” I said just now, and I repeat it, He saw us in the glass of His eternal purposes, He foreknew us, He looked

ahead, and saw what we should be, who we would be, and His love went forth to us before the day star ever began to shine.

Do think of it. “The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” That He should love us at all is a wonder, that He should have loved us always, is a wonder of wonders, and this love is a part of His eternal purposes, and is as old as His arrangements for the history of the universe. “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Truly, this was an ancient love.

Note further that as this love was divine and ancient, so it was *a preeminently practical love*, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Jesus could not give any more than Himself. He not only gave His crown, His throne, His manhood, His life, His sufferings, His death, His offices, His excellences, His merits, He gave *Himself*, His Godhead, His humanity, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

It is not possible for you to measure the unknown depths of Christ’s sufferings, but if you could, you would not have arrived at “himself.” It is not merely that which He did and said that Jesus gave for us, but He gave Himself. It was not simply that which belonged to Him which Jesus handed over for us, but He gave Himself, “Who loved me, and gave *himself* for me.”

O beloved, I wish I had the strength and the ability to think and to speak to you upon this practical display of our Lord’s love as it deserves, but I have not. Meditate upon it, I pray you. He gave Himself for you in the everlasting covenant when He stood as your Surety and Representative. He gave Himself for you through the long ages in which He waited to come to earth to redeem you. He gave Himself for you when He assumed your nature, and became bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh. He gave Himself for you through a life of toil and righteousness. He gave Himself for you as your Substitute when He, “His own self, bore our sins in his own body on the tree.” In the scourging, the shame, the spitting, the bloody sweat, the crucifixion, He gave Himself for you.

Take these blessed words of the apostle, and put them in your mouth, and let them lie there as wafers made with honey, till they melt into your very soul, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.” In all these wondrous senses, keeping back nothing, reserving for Himself nothing, nay, not even the name of Himself, He loved me, and gave Himself for me. Truly, this was practical love.

And I may say of it, in the next place, that it was *a love altogether immeasurable*. If you measure a love by its gifts, you have certainly an immeasurable love here, because it was proved by an immeasurable gift. The Nature of the Lord Jesus Christ is not to be comprehended. The wondrous union of Godhead and manhood made Him, I was about to say, something more than God, for He had added to all the infinity of His Godhead the capacity to suffer as a man. But He gave Himself at His utmost—the boundless, the inconceivable, the indescribable—He gave Himself for me.

There is a limit to everything else, but not to the love of God. You say to the sea, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther,” but you cannot say that to this boundless sea of divine love. You do not know by experience how much God loves you, you have only drunk a little of the sweetness of this wondrous well of living water, but you cannot tell the depth of it.

There is no bottom to it, you cannot exhaust its supply, you may drink, and drink, and drink again, through a long life, ay, and throughout eternity you may go on receiving of this love, but you will never measure its heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths. That is quite beyond your power. You can only love, dear mother, to a certain degree, though you love your child to the death, you can only love, dear husband, up to a certain point, though you are willing to lay down your life to raise your spouse from a sick bed, but God stops nowhere in His love, it is as boundless and infinite as He is Himself.

Our Lord Jesus Christ cannot possibly or conceivably be limited in His love. I want you to try to get hold of this thought. Do notice it. HE loved me, such a one as He is, He loved *me*.

“Christ first, me last: nothing between but love.”

Those words are very sweet to me, I read them somewhere, and they cling to my memory.

[As the sermon is shorter than usual, we insert the verses referred to by Mr. Spurgeon, from which the title of the discourse has been selected.]

“WHO LOVED ME”

GALATIANS 2:20

*“Three blessed sunbeams, guiding all I see.
Three tender chords, each full of melody,
Three healing leaves, balm for my agony.*

*“HE loved me—the Father’s only Son,
He gave Himself—the precious, spotless One;
He shed His blood, and thus the work was done.*

*“HE LOVED, not merely pitied. Here I rest:
Sorrow may come, I to His heart am pressed.
What should I fear while sheltered on His breast?*

*“Wonder of wonders! Jesus loved me!
A wretch! lost, ruined, sunk in misery!
He sought me, found me, raised me, set me free.*

*“My soul the order of the words approve,
Christ first, me last: nothing between but love.
Lord, keep me always down—Thyself above!*

*“Trusting to Thee—not struggling restlessly,
So shall I daily gain the victory:
“I”—“yet not I, but Christ”—WHO LOVED ME!”*

“Who loved me,” the first word is “who,” the last word is “me,” and there is “nothing between but love.” Oh, that is a blessed position for anyone to be in! Christ shall be first, I will be glad to be anywhere, to be nothing, to be last, so long as there shall be this sweet link of love between my soul and my Savior, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

Let us reflect yet a moment further that this love is *an abiding love*, “Who loved me.” But He is unchanging, so that He loves me still. He cannot love me more, He will not love me less, He has loved me at no period more than He loves me now, and if just now I may be groaning because of my imperfections, and mourning because of my tribulations, yet He loved me so as to give Himself for me, and He has never abated from that love, and He never will.

It is a very fine thing, no doubt, to have worldly substance, but it melts like the hoar frost in the sun. It is a very great mercy to have bodily health, but how small a thing soon takes it away, and turns the joy of life into the shadow of death! But if you get this love of Christ, you have a treasure which can never be lost, a blessing that will never be exhausted. “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Sit down, dear child of God, and say to yourself, “Here I have something which I shall never lose, it cannot be taken from me. Oh, that by grace I may be enabled to rejoice in it, and to return the love of my poor heart to Him who ceases not to love me!”

There is a great deal that might be said of such a Savior as this, but I feel a consolation in my heart in being unable to say any new and fresh thing tonight, for the subject in itself ought to be to you full of joy, and if your heart is right, it will be. If your heart is not right with God, you will be craving for fine expressions and pretty phrases. Judge your own spiritual condition then by this test, does this theme in

itself touch you? “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.” I will use it as a thermometer, and drop it into your heart to see the warmth of your affection to Christ. If you be as you should be, full of a devout attachment to Him, you will say, “Ay, that is all I need to feel, and know, He loved me, and gave Himself for me!”

So much then, upon the fact remembered.

II. Now secondly, beloved friends, let me speak to you just for a few minutes on THE FAITH CONFESSED.

Paul says, “I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

Observe first, that the faith which made Paul live was *faith in a Person*, “the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Possibly some of you are trying to get faith, and yet you do not know what saving faith is. You have heard a great deal about it, but it is an astonishing thing that the best definition of faith in the world does not make men see what faith is. The gas may be very bright, but a man who is blind does not see any the better because of the brilliance of the light. The eyes of our soul must be opened if we are to see what faith is.

Now saving faith is faith in a Person, faith in the living, loving Lord, who gave Himself for us. Do you believe in Jesus Christ? I do not merely mean, do you believe in His teachings? You must believe in them. But to be saved you must believe in Him, “who loved me, and gave himself for me.” There He stands, my faith seems to see Him even now at the right hand of God, risen from the dead and gone into glory, and I come and trust Him, and take Him to be my Savior.

If He be my Savior, it is His business to save me, I am not to save myself. I put myself into His hands that He may keep me. I bring my foul self to Him, that He may cleanse me, my dead self to Him that He may quicken me, my naked self to Him that He may clothe me, my good-for-nothing self to Him that He may be precious to me, and that I may be made precious in Him. He is to be everything to me. It is not merely what I read about Him that I am to believe, but I am to trust Himself.

Now, beloved, let those of us who have believed in Jesus long ago exercise that faith afresh in this gracious loving way by now living by faith upon the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us.

This faith, you perceive, is *a faith in a clear and distinct fact*, “the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” To go again over the sacred ground on which we trod just now, the apostle does not say, “I have faith in the Son of God, of whom I hope that He loved me.” He knows it, he is sure of it, and there is no comfort to come out of faith until it learns to speak without stammering, and to say of the Lord Jesus, “who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

This either is a fact, or it is not, and if it be a fact, full of every consolation, why should I not know it? Ought you to give sleep to your eyes until you know that He loves you, and that you are His? This can be proved, as I have already shown you. He that believeth in Jesus has the sure token of divine love. If you do trust Him, trust Him wholly and alone, then He loved you, and gave Himself for you, for you the manger at Bethlehem, for you the cross at Calvary, for you the empty sepulcher, for you His pleading before the eternal throne. He loved you, and gave Himself for you, and it is for your faith to learn to speak this great truth plainly.

This faith was next *an appropriating faith*, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.” No faith except a personal faith will save the soul, another man’s faith will not save me. I must have a Christ of my own. The love that Christ has to others is pleasant to reflect upon, but it cannot give me peace. It must be love which He has to me if it is to save me, “Who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*.”

Somebody says that such a desire as that is selfish. I answer that it is nonsense to talk so. A wife is not thought to be selfish because she rejoices in her husband’s love. A child is not selfish because he is happy in his father’s love. How, dear friends, can I take any joy in the love of Christ to men in general, if I have no sense whatever of His love to me? Of what use could it be to me? In order that I may love my fellow men, I must first come to know that Christ loves me. How can I have a blessing in the saving

of the souls of others if my own soul is not first saved? Let your religion begin at home, and when you make sure of its presence there, then you may sing—

*“Now will I tell to sinners round
What a dear Savior I have found.”*

It would be a poor occupation to go out and tell them of a dear Savior that you had not found, to tell them of manna that you had never gathered, and of waters of which you had never drunk. No, in order to be truly useful in the Lord’s service, you must first of all know in your own experience the truth of Paul’s words, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

Our text is the language of faith. Unbelief says, “Yes, Christ is very loving,” but if you have true faith, you will say, “He loved me.” Unbelief says, “I know that Christ loves His people, but I am afraid that He would never love me.” Such talk as this is mistrustful, and ruinous to the soul, but faith, as soon as ever it opens its mouth, begins to make a personal appropriation of the blessings of the grace of God.

What do you do when you come to the communion table? Do you come there to see other people eat bread and drink wine? Nay, but in communion you each of you eat, and you each of you drink, and that is the very essence of communion. So must each of you take Christ to be yours personally, and say, “He loved me, and gave himself for me.” This is the faith which is mentioned by the apostle, an appropriating faith.

And as I read the text, it looks to me as if it was *a faith full of wonderment*. Though the apostle speaks of it as a matter of fact, yet he seems to be much astonished, as he says, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

I am sure that if the Lord will dart into your soul a sense of the love of Christ, it will ravish your heart, and it will carry you away with astonishment. You will go home and say to yourself, “The greatest wonder in the two worlds of heaven and earth is this, that He loved me, and gave Himself for me,” and in consequence you will be filled with holy joy and rejoicing. “He loved me, and gave himself for me,” will ring like marriage bells in your heart. Not all the harps of heaven can sound out sweeter music than this text when the Holy Spirit speaks it to our soul, “the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

III. I must not tarry longer on this sweet theme, but must finish with this point, THE FAVOR ENJOYED.

There is a certain power that lies in this fact remembered, and that grows out of this faith confessed. Paul says that he lived by the faith of the Son of God who loved him, and gave Himself for him.

Beloved friends, a sense of the love of Christ to you personally *will affect your whole life*. It will change it at first, but it will keep it changed ever afterwards, and it will go on increasing in its power over you till, when you fully know it, every thought, and every word, and every action will seem to be set in the key of love, “who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

That religion which does not affect the whole life is a dead and worthless religion, but this essence of our holy faith, “who loved me, and gave himself for me,” is divinely operative upon the entire man. Alone, or with others in the family, or in the business, whatever his calling is, this will tincture it all with a heavenly sweetness, “who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

And this will be particularly seen in *the assuaging of your griefs*. Full of pain, you will say to yourself, “Yet He loved me. He has not sent this pain for nothing, He doth not afflict willingly, for He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” If you are very poor, you will say to yourself, “He gave the riches to Dives, but Lazarus lay in His bosom. He loved me, and gave Himself for me, and that is better than wealth.”

And if ever you come to be despised for His sake, and men cast out your name as evil, you will say, “I do not mind it at all, I can even rejoice in it, for He loved me, and gave Himself for me, and I may

well give up myself, and my reputation, and everything else for Him.” Sorrow ceases to be sorrow when once there is in the heart a sweet sense of the infinite love of Christ.

This thought will also help *you in your labor*. When you have something to do for Jesus that rather tries you, when you feel disappointed and baffled, and the devil tempts you to give it all up and run away, you will say to yourself, “How can I? He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” By Gethsemane and Calvary you will bind yourself to the sternest labor for His dear sake. Nothing is too hot or too heavy for a man whose heart is on fire with divine love. When the torrents of love sweep through the soul, then every obstacle is overcome.

I can go as a missionary to the Congo and joyfully die in that malarious climate, when I know that He loved me, and gave Himself for me. I can try to preach in the streets of London amidst the jeers and the noise of the passers-by, when I know that He loved me, and gave Himself for me. You will go cheerfully to the slums, you will visit the lodging houses, you will teach the ignorant, you will look after the foul and the depraved when you get this truth impressed on your heart, “He loved me, and gave himself for me.”

And beloved friends, *this will help you in prayer*. When you are at the mercy seat, tremblingly asking for some great favor, tempted to fear that you will not receive it, very strong will your faith become when you hear the whisper, “who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” He that spared not Himself, how shall He not give me all things? We ask with great confidence and assurance when we feel the force of this blessed truth.

By and by we shall come to die. I am constantly reminded of this fact. During the last two or three weeks we have lost more friends than I remember being taken away in a similar period at almost any other time. We are getting old together, and so there are more dying than there used to be when the young people first joined the church. Well, I shall soon be going, and so will you, but we shall not dread the grave, for Jesus loved us, and gave Himself for us.

Will He not be with me even in my last moments? Certainly He will. I shall not dread the terrors of the great judgment day, for “He loved me, and gave himself for me.” Who is He that condemneth, now that Christ hath died, and risen again, and sitteth at the right hand of God to plead for us? The terrors of the world to come, the quivering earth, the burning sky, the falling stars—all these will cause no perturbation of mind when we are fully assured that He loved us, and gave Himself for us.

Thinking of this sublime passage one seems to feel his wings growing, and is ready to take flight to the upper sky, for what even in heaven is there brighter or more blessed than this Jesus, “who loved me, and gave himself for me”? Is not this heaven’s own song, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood”?

O my dear hearers, I stand here and try to talk to you in my feeble way about these great truths, but do you know them yourselves? If you do, you know more than Solomon ever knew. If you know this love of Christ, you know more than all the Greek philosophers put together. You need not be ashamed in any company, the knowledge of the love of Christ is the most excellent of all the sciences, there is none that can be compared with it.

But if you do not know it, I pray my Lord, in His infinite mercy, to disturb and disquiet you until you do know it. What right have you to rest without faith in Jesus? You have no safety, indeed you have no hope. Without God, without Christ, you will die without forgiveness or hope of heaven. God bring you to seek His face tonight, ere another sun has risen! Seek Him. Seek Him. Trust in the Savior’s finished work, and I hope we shall yet see you again as you come forward and say, “Yes, He loved me, and gave Himself for me, and here am I to confess it to the glory of His grace.” God grant it, for Jesu’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—116 (SONG 2), 248, 731

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

GALATIANS 2:16-21 AND 3

Galatians Chapter 2. Verse 16. *Knowing that a man is not justified by the work of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*

This is the primary truth to be proclaimed by the Christian ministry. It is the foundation stone of all Gospel preaching, and yet, somehow or other, such is the hardness of the human heart, that it is the most difficult thing to induce our hearers to build on this foundation. Many of them are always trying to lean upon their own works, and so struggling to get back under the old legal dispensation, instead of rejoicing in the liberty of the dispensation of grace. One objection to the doctrines of grace rather than the doctrine of law is this, that some think it will lead to sin. The apostle puts it thus—

17. *But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.*

For the tendency of the Gospel of grace is to excite gratitude in those who receive it. If I am freely pardoned, then I must love Him who has thus generously forgiven me. Gratitude is the root of true virtue, and the mainspring of all holiness. If there be base minded men who can suck poison out of this honeycomb, is Christ to be blamed for their evil doing? God forbid! But if, on the other hand, you and I go back to trusting in works, then we are indeed guilty in the sight of God.

18. *For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.*

If I once said I would not trust in my good works, and now go back to trust in them, I have already, whatever may be my outward conduct, perpetrated a great sin.

19-20. *For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

I do not know a better epitome of Christian experience than this. This is the daily walk of a true child of God, if he liveth after any other sort, then he liveth not a Christian's life at all. Christ living in us, ourselves living upon Christ, and our union to Christ being visibly maintained by an act of simple faith in Him, this is the true Christian's life.

21. *I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

If a man can be saved by his own works, and willings, and doings, then Christ's death was an unnecessary piece of torture, and instead of being the most glorious manifestation of divine love, it was a shameful waste, putting upon Christ a terrible burden of suffering which was totally unnecessary.

Galatians Chapter 3. Verse 1. *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?*

These Galatians thought that they were very philosophical, and very intellectual, but the apostle says, “O foolish Galatians!” They thought that they had been led by reason, and guided by the learning of their teachers, but Paul calls it witchery, “Who hath bewitched you?” he asks, as if anything which led a man to trust in his own works should be as much abhorred as the incantations of a witch, “Who hath bewitched you?”

It is a dangerous state, it is a devilish snare to be brought into, to be led to trust to frames, and feelings, and experiences, and doings, and prayers, or to anything else but Christ. It is a strange thing that those who have seen Christ should ever go back to these things. Lord, keep us every day, amongst our other sins, from our own self-righteous nature!

Now the apostle is going to reason with the Galatians against their self-righteousness.

2. *This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

“You know that the Spirit of God is necessary to salvation. You have received that, did you get the Spirit through the works of the law, or by simply hearing the Gospel, and believing it?” The answer comes at once, if we have received the Spirit it was by the hearing of faith, and not by the works of the law.

3. *Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*

Surely, the way in which the Christian life begins is the method in which it is to be sustained. “As ye have received Christ Jesus, the Lord,” the apostle says in another place, “so walk ye in him.” If you have begun in the flesh, go on in the flesh, but if you really know that your beginning was in the Spirit, then do not go back to the flesh.

4. *Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.*

This is another pertinent question.

5. *He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

They had miraculous gifts among them as a church, and the apostle asks them whether these were works of the law, or whether they were not exercised as the result of faith. The answer is clear. It was the believing man who wrought the miracle, not the self-righteous man.

Paul is now going to take the Galatians far back in Jewish history.

6. *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*

He was not saved by his works, but by his faith. His faith was the means of the imputation to him of the righteousness of the Savior who was yet to come.

7. *Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.*

He was called the father of the faithful, therefore the faithful, those who believe as he did, and are full of his faith, are his children.

8-10. *And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*

Now, if every one who has once violated God’s law is cursed forever, how mad are those who hope to enter heaven by that very law which is the gate to shut them out! How dare they confide in that which is their worst enemy, which is sworn to curse them in time and in eternity!

11. *But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.*

Scripture lays it down as a rule, that justified men live by faith, if this be the rule, then certainly they do not live by works.

12. *And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.*

So that the justified man is not justified by the law, but by faith. He stands before God, not in what he does, not even in what the Spirit enables him to do, his own prayers, and tears, and communings with Christ, his own labors, his earnest and indefatigable attempts to extend the kingdom of Christ, all count for nothing in the matter of his justification. He hangs them all upon the cross of Christ, and relies only upon the cross, looking in no manner whatever to anything which comes of himself.

13-14. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*

We were all under the curse of the law, but Christ voluntarily took our place, and was made a curse for us, so that the blessing might be ours.

15-16. *Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*

Notice how important a single letter of the Scriptures may be. If vital doctrine may depend upon the use of a singular or plural noun, therefore let us jealously guard the smallest jot or tittle of the inspired Word of God.

17-19. *And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law?*

Some might argue that as the law cannot justify, it is useless, but on the contrary, it serves a very definite purpose, as Paul goes on to show.

19-22. *It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

Paul constantly comes back to this point, that salvation is all of grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

23-25. *But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*

The apostle is not speaking of a schoolmaster as we understand that word, but of the slave or servant who took the boys to school, watched over them in school and out, and even used the rod if occasion demanded.

26. *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

The Fatherhood of God is common to all believers, but there is no universal fatherhood, as many teach it in these days.

27-29. *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then ye are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

May this be true of all of us, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.